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754 less when 'he (or she) of the pythons' has passed by. Mwaisumo explained: 'They say that if the owner of pythons or the owner of medicines passes when food has been spread out to dry, the food will disappear. He bewitches it (*ukulaga*). It is as if he hankers after the food in his heart, and it disappears and becomes less.' Nevertheless, of the thirty-eight accusations of witchcraft recorded, none actually turned on loss of grain or pulse. We heard also that a witch may spoil a brewing of beer, causing it to taste bitter, but again we could trace no case of this.

754 831 The lust of witches for good food is constantly emphasized by the Nyakyusa and, unlike some other Bantu people, they do not make a direct connection between witchcraft and sex: there is no suggestion of *incubi* or *succubae* such as play a great part in Pondo thought,[1] and sexual dreams are not taken as evidence of witchcraft. The facts that the witches are witches by virtue of 'pythons in the stomach', that they always go naked, and fly through the air riding their pythons when on their evil nocturnal errands, suggest sexual associations, but we cannot prove that the Nyakyusa are conscious of such symbolism. It is, however, significant that the word commonly used for working witchcraft, 'throttling' (*ukupita*), is also used as a polite word for sexual intercourse, and that the other word for working witchcraft *ukulaga*[2] (passive: *ukulagigwa*) is similar to *ukulagwa*, meaning to copulate. Bestiality and homosexuality between a grown man and a boy (but not between two youths) are spoken of as witchcraft (*ubulosi*), and sex play between girls, including stretching of the vaginal opening, is called *ubugalagala*, a word used for the cunning—the wicked cleverness—of witches.

754 • 841 An association is also made between witchcraft on the one hand and menstruation and pregnancy on the other. A woman who is a witch is said to pass on her witchcraft to her child by neglecting the menstruation taboos before the child is yet conceived. 'It starts when a woman is menstruating, then she begins to give the child her cunning (*ubugalagala*).' Some of the menstrual blood is

[1] cf. Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 273–89.

[2] *Ukulaga* and *ukulosi* are from the same root. For its meaning in other Bantu languages cf. H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. II, pp. 509ff. Also E. J. and J. D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen*, p. 255; C. M. N. White in *Africa*, 1948 (Vol. XVIII), pp. 83 ff.; H. H. Johnston, *A Comparative Study of Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, Vol. II, p. 426. The close similarity of cunning in a number of languages is striking.

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believed to remain in a woman and, if she has neglected the taboos, this blood 'rots' the child later conceived (*cf.* Document, p. 219). This connection is insisted upon, though witchcraft inherited from the father is spoken of as being carried directly in his blood, which is thought to be transferred to his wife during intercourse.

Furthermore, a pregnant woman is believed to have some of the attributes of a witch. She, like a witch, causes grain and pulse to diminish if she passes near by when it is spread out to dry, or greets women who are stamping or grinding grain. If she speaks or comes too close 'the child inside catches hold of the food, and it disappears'. And if she should speak inadvertently, forgetting that she is pregnant, she must throw a stone or a piece of stick into the grain, or take a little of the flour in her hand, otherwise the women will say: 'She is proud, that girl, she is a witch, why is she talking?' and it is thought that she will have a miscarriage. A pregnant woman, like a witch, and one who has been using medicine, is spoken of as 'heavy' (*nzito*) in contrast with one who is 'empty' (*kwaa*), having nothing in the belly, and Mwaikambo explained that, 'When they speak of a pregnant woman being "heavy", they think that perhaps the foetus is witchcraft.' The foetus and the python of witchcraft are felt to be somewhat alike; but in most situations they are clearly distinguished, and indeed it is held that a woman may have both. If the afterbirth is delayed it is said that the woman is herself a witch, and her python is closing up the vaginal passage, so that the afterbirth cannot come away. A pregnant woman is not spoken of as a witch unless she harms someone by neglecting the taboos connected with her state, and her husband, who must keep the same taboos, may also be called a witch if he breaks them.

Sickness and death among men and cattle, and a diminution in the milk yield of cows, are held to be common results of witchcraft, and any 'unnatural' event, such as a case of bestiality, or of sodomy between a grown man and a boy (not between two youths), or of intercourse between a young man and an old woman, or of unusual behaviour among animals or birds, is taken as evidence that witches are at work. It is the 'unnatural' element that is emphasized (*cf.* Document, p. 223). An owl hooting on one's roof, and someone staring at one, are also taken as indications of witchcraft.

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12. INHERITANCE OF WITCHCRAFT

Bwalile (elderly pagan man).

Question: "How does a mother give her child witchcraft? How does a father give a child witchcraft?"

"It starts when a woman is menstruating; then she begins to give a child her cunning (*ubugolagola*). It is said that when a woman is menstruating she should avoid certain things (*ukwelile*), particularly she should not pass behind people. For when a woman is menstruating a child has *ipepo* in her belly. People know that a certain woman is cunning when they see that she does not avoid people at certain times. Then they say: "Friends, this woman is spoiling the child. Why does she not observe the avoidances? Look, we have seen that she is fruitful (meaning that she is menstruating)." For it is that dirt which creates witchcraft. When a woman does not avoid, then she gives the child in her belly witchcraft. It is from this that witchcraft really comes. When a woman is not cunning, then she always observes the avoidance taboos; she does not go about anyhow. From of old it has been thought important that a menstruating woman should observe certain avoidances. A woman avoids certain things because she fears to spoil the child in her belly. When a woman does not avoid these things, the dirt, that is to say the menstrual blood, goes to where the child is. That is how she spoils the child. On this account women fear to go about anyhow, to pass behind people; they fear those medicines with which we men smear our bodies, all those for good fortune and others. Especially they fear a fierce medicine, that of fire. For there is a medicine with which some people smear themselves which causes a person to faint if the user strikes him once with the fire of his hand. It is this medicine which spoils the child in the belly of a menstruating woman if she passes behind a man. This is the lineage of witchcraft. It comes especially from this, from that dirty little thing (i.e. woman) who does not observe the avoidance rules. Hence, we say she has given her child witchcraft.

"A father gives his child witchcraft because the man's blood goes into the woman, for a woman is a pocket."

Ntulanengwa confirmed the above statement of the origin of witchcraft, and explained:

"A woman does not menstruate when she is pregnant, but some menstrual blood remains in her, which may "spoil" her. We all think that when a woman is menstruating some of the blood remains in her

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belly, and it is this which spoils the child when a woman does not avoid certain things. There is no other way in which a woman gives her child witchcraft.'

Mwalumbo (1938).

Some people have witchcraft implanted in them (*ubupanda*) by their parents. Some children are witches; they are born with it in their stomachs. When a child is small, even a tiny baby, the witches may take it with them to bewitch (*kwenenga*) in order that it also may learn the business of witchcraft. Hence sometimes it is said that a mother, or perhaps a father, shielded himself behind her (his) child, meaning that he fought with other witches and when they were going to spear him he put his child in front of him. When such a child grows up he will be skilled in witchcraft.'

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§81 The first act of the ritual, the giving of the *undumila*[1] medicine
79 to the girl, is a symbol of sexual intercourse, and it is thought to be a prophylactic against pain in intercourse, frequent or painful periods, and injury from contact with those who are 'heavy'. 'It is given so that her belly may not be painful,' said Mwaimumo's mother, an elderly woman. Kaitile's wife explained: 'The pungwe root is the penis of the husband, the cup is her vagina, the salt, also pungwe, is the semen of her husband. Biting the root and eating the salt is copulation.' Mwakisonde's wife gave a similar interpretation:

●§82 The *undumi'o* is put through the leaf of a bark-cloth tree, shaped into
79 a cup, and it is a sign of man and woman, the penis in the vagina. It is similar to the plantains which we give her when we wash her. The plantains are a symbol of the husband. If we do not give her the *dipele* medicine the blood never dries up, and it is the same with the *undumila*. If it is not given she constantly has periods and is barren. Yes, some have a period twice in one month—those who have ruined. Only a few are like this, not many. . . . The *undumila* is given to the girl at once, in the month as soon as she grows up, so that she can go about without fear; otherwise, if she washes without having had it, then a heavy one may walk over her footprint, that is overstep her, and she will not bear a child, she menstruates continually.

Kaitile's wife said much the same: 'If the heavy ones have overstepped her, her body runs. The man is not sterile, but the woman is; the man's semen is fertile, but the woman has painful periods. It is the pain of periods we symbolize in the sharpness of the *undumila* and salt.'

§§27 The heavy ones (*abasisi*), feared both during the puberty ritual
§§36 and by a mother with a new-born child, are those who sleep with their husbands. They include women both before and after conception. 'When the pregnancy is advanced and the husband has left off sleeping with his wife, then she is not heavy and she can keep a mother with a new-born baby company and hold the baby. A man who is sleeping with a woman is also heavy. They say: "He will overstep us." ' This was the statement of Mwakisonde's wife and Kaitile, questioned separately, confirmed every point. We then asked Kaitile: 'How is the heaviness (*ubusisi*) from lying with a man dangerous to those going through puberty and childbirth?'

Kaitile: 'Because those who are with their husbands are heavy, they are strong, their fellow the bride (*mwanga*) is empty, light in

[1] *Undumila* is derived from *ukulumila*, to bite, to be painful.

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§27 front. See, the man ejects semen! Does it not go inside? The woman §34 becomes heavy and overstrips the bride.'

§34 §33 Even after she has been treated, the bride avoids any close contact with those who are 'heavy'; in particular they are excluded from her hut. Her own mother 'does not sleep with the father at all from the time he girl grows up until she goes to her husband, and begins intercourse with him. It is taboo. She says to her husband: "See, I am keeping my child company." ' But the 'play' of her companions does not matter, for *intercourse inter crura* does not make anyone heavy; it is the semen of a man in a woman's belly which makes her heavy, and her husband also, through contact with her.

789 The second medicine used at the puberty ritual is the *ikipiki*,[1] made from the bark of certain small-leafed forest trees. The same species is used by many Nyakyusa families, but the identity of the person who provides it is very important, for it is identified with the blood (*ilopa*) of the family. In the puberty-marriage ritual the groom's mother provides the *ikipiki* with which the bride washes at her husband's (*if she is a senior wife*), at the rite of 'putting her in' (*ukwingenia*), at the second washing with her husband, at the shaving, and at the washing before jumping over fire. The same medicine is used each time. It is also sprinkled on the bananas she eats at the *ukwingenia*. The bride's own mother, however, provides the *ikipiki* which is added to her porridge and buried under the hearth he day she first menstruates, and that used for washing her father, or brother, and mother at the *ukwingenia*. Also, should it be known that the bride is not a virgin, the mother-in-law will refuse o bring her *ikipiki* and it must be provided for *each rite by her mother*. The medicine is in itself awesome (*nsipa*). Kamile's wife remarked one day that the bride slept with one of her maids in front of her, 'at her stomach', and one behind. We asked why. She replied: 'That *ikipiki* medicine! It's awesome. She 789 fears to be alone.' If someone has not given her the *ikipiki* to drink §94 and heavy ones cook food and give it to her she goes bad, she has periods without cessation.' The mother gives porridge with *ikipiki* to the girl and buries some under the hearth. That means she be heavy in her stomach, for if heavy ones warm themselves at the fire in the house, she is in danger of going bad, she will have a continuous issue of blood.' 'If the *ikipiki* were not given, her period

[1] *Ukupiki*: a tree of any species. *Ikipiki*: medicine made from the bark of certain species (one is a *Mimusops*) and used in the rituals of death, puberty, and birth. [§ 28]

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would never dry up.' Kasitile said: 'The work of the *undemile* and *ikipili* are the same, they are together. The heavy ones will overstep the girl, they are going to injure her so that she is barren, constantly menstruating, with painful periods.' Lyandilelo, a woman doctor, and exceptionally intelligent, said: 'The bride uses the *ikipili* medicine because she is empty (*kwasi*). So she washes and eats bananas with *ikipili*. If she does not wash with it she will have diarrhoea.'

The *ikipili* is also said to make a bride 'patient and polite'. 'If the girl did not wash with the powdered medicine (*ikipili*) she might be rude and proud when she went to her husband's home and insult men there.' This was the statement of Mwakwelebeja, an old commoner particularly well versed in matters of ritual, and it was separately confirmed both by his wife and by Lyandilelo, the woman doctor, but not everyone knew the connection. Mwaihoja, the chief, who was present when Mwakwelebeja gave his explanation, said: 'Really! I never knew that!' and his wives, when applied to, said: 'We don't know. The mothers have died' (this though some of them were past middle age).

Angombwike identified the *ikipili* medicine with 'the blood of a lineage and a bride's treatment with it with the union in marriage. He said:

> As soon as a girl grows up people begin to think about her bearing children. They say: 'The mothers *iron* is discharged, the blood for bearing children has come.' When they grind and brew beer in her honour, they do it in honour of her 'iron' [i.e. menstrual blood]. They give her medicines for disciplining her in the lineage of her husband. When the mothers hear they cry: 'Oum, oum, it has fruited! (*Ifwele, ifwele, ifwele*).' The girl is given a bundle of the medicine, powdered, and is made to wear a belt of bark-cloth with the powder in it; the medicine is brought from the husband's home by his mothers. The husband, as it were, says: 'That is my blood [or semen] which I have sent to her.' The little bundle is the symbol (*chimapilo*) of the child she will bear, the belt with medicine on it means that the mothers 'iron' belongs to the blood of that husband. The powdered medicine is brought by the husband's mother. A man's chief wife always has a bamboo flask or a pot full of medicine of their lineage (*ze likolalo lyaku*), powdered ready for use. If she dies it goes to the second wife, if the husband dies to the first wife of the eldest son, and by her it is distributed as usual. The powdered medicine is the blood (*mekwangwe*[1] *ya dipa*).

[1] i.e. the powder made from the *ikipili*.

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Mwakanjiki and his fellows, said that Lwembe is there (in the belly), they did not speak of Kyala. Did you not hear at Lubaga?[1] What did I ask for?

G. W.: You asked for a child!

KAMTILE: Yes, I asked for a child. The menstrual blood is that which we discharge when lying together. I, the man, discharge, and the woman also discharges. If Kyala does not support us, then that blood degenerates, it becomes blood which flows out at the period.

G. W.: But the girl has periods before intercourse?

KAMTILE: Yes, indeed, that is her blood. Does a woman not discharge? If she sleeps alone, as a bachelor, her blood just flows out, it does not create a child. In intercourse we try to discharge together. If I see that the woman is gasping I try to discharge with her. If I am gasping and wish to discharge, I wait for the woman. Yes, there is choice. We are all like that. But our fathers feared that if the woman discharges first she will bear a girl, and if I, the man, discharge first she will bear a boy! The shades of her fathers are there in the body of a girl, and we drive them away. It is like the case of a widow; the situations are just alike. We treat the girl and say: 'Now the woman is free.' At the eating of the bull we seem to say: 'You shade, be present and look upon us. This meat is for you to go away a little. May she bear children.'

G. W.: So if the shade is in the girl she cannot bear children?

KAMTILE: What can the shade go away with if you do not pray?

QUESTION: What happens if she washes and performs all the ritual with a man, a husband, and then leaves him, without having had full intercourse, for another man?

KAMTILE: It does not matter. She is freed from the lineage of her father, she has moved to another lineage, so they do not treat her again. (*Iloko ndombe, akwiko akilolo kya guno, asumile akilolo kinge, pajuje kulikanimbilaye kinge.*)

On another occasion Kamtile said that intercourse took place 'when Kyala and the shade: have gathered there. They come out in the woman and her belly sprouts [i.e. she conceives].'

Kamtile was not offering a personal interpretation when he talked about conception. Conversation with a number of people showed that the ideas he put forward were generally held. Mwandisi, the old blind chief, when asked where the blood to beget children came from, replied:

It is from him who makes us all do things, Kyala and the shades together.

[1] Rituals are performed on behalf of the country at Lubaga. Kamtile was a hereditary priest. See *Communal Rituals among the Nyakyusa* (forthcoming).

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§41 Question: And menses?
775 Mwaseni: When the shades are angry a woman is constantly menstruating and does not bear a child; if they are not angry she conceives.

§33 And on another occasion he said:
§42
775 Lust comes from the shades; if they are angry with you you are impotent; you cannot beget a child.

His wife added: 'My husband says in his heart: "Let me go to my wife." It is the shade that makes him.'

One informant after another mentioned *both* Kyala (or Lwembe) *and* the shades as being present in intercourse. Mwakiondo, after
[§43] talking of miscarriages being due to the anger of the shades, went on:

Kyala has created the bowel of desire. If a man is impotent we say Kyala has not given him breath to beget a child.

Kaseye: If my child runs off with a man, whether a stranger or her husband, believe she has reached puberty and I continue angry, if Kyala has helped me she does not bear a child. Then it is said 'her father was angry'. They come to me bringing the remaining marriage-cattle and I pray and she bears a child.

Question: If the husband asked for her properly and deflowered her before puberty?

Kaseye: There is no case, it was all right, even long ago. I said: 'Finish paying the cattle.' Perhaps he begged me, saying: 'I am poor, Father,' and I was satisfied.

§42 No pagan questions the power of the shades over fertility, and
775 this power is believed to be exercised by the mother's lineage, as well as that of the father. Angombwike, the Christian, said:

[§41] The pagans fear that if they do not perform the puberty ritual when a girl reaches puberty, she will dry up. The blood will not flow again even though she is not pregnant. Then, if her periods do not come for two or three months, like this, she will never bear a child. They say the shades are angry and have bound her fertility. And if she does not reach puberty at all, if menstruation does not begin, her father prays in the banana grove, saying: 'You, fathers, what are you angry about?' And if the girl's mother's brother is angry on account of cattle—perhaps her father has not given marriage-cattle properly for her mother—he, the mother's brother, binds a wisp of the litter (*ukyilundo*) from her puberty ritual in the loft, then the girl will not bear a child. Inquiry is made of a diviner who says: 'The mother's brother has bound her.' The father takes a cow to him and says: 'I am sorry, I have done wrong. I

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the women has constantly to handle it and if, just after intercourse, she [546]
has to do this without time to wash first, then the child, we think, will
get diarrhoea or grow thin. Women[1] always wash very carefully in the [512]
mornings after intercourse, both for the sake of the children and the
husband. If the woman touches food unwashed after intercourse we
think it will make her husband sick, and he will get unhealthily fat. If [753]
a child is old enough to play by itself . . . so that the wife can wash
properly before attending to it, then it is all right for the couple to have
intercourse, but not for the woman to become pregnant again yet. She
should not do that until the child is weaned![2]

Contact with menstrual blood or a menstruating woman is held [541] ●
to be dangerous to a man, more particularly to a warrior, hence
there is an absolute taboo on intercourse during menstruation (for
five to eight days) and restrictions on cooking for a man. A men-
struating woman does not blow up the fire on which her husband's
food is cooking, or squeeze the food to test whether it is ready, or
scrape ash off bananas or sweet potatoes she has roasted, or serve
food, for 'her breath comes from her belly and it is dirty; her belly
is dirty on account of the menstrual blood. All her body is dirty.
She does not wash. When she washes, you, the husband, think that
the flow has dried up and catch hold of her!' So a woman who is
menstruating fans the fire instead of blowing it, and calls a co-
wife or a child to serve the food she has cooked. She does not even
crouch over the fire to warm herself, lest she contaminate it; and
she neither uses the common calabash cup for drinking nor scoops
water from the household water jar with her hand, but fashions a
cup for herself from a leaf, or has her own little water-pot. She
avoids passing behind or shaking hands with a man; she avoids a
new-born infant; she keeps well away from cattle, neither passing
behind them when they are in the homestead nor clearing out
dung from the byre; she avoids touching medicines or entering the
house of a doctor; and she avoids eating pumpkin or pumpkin
leaves, or picking them. These taboos are enforced lest she injure
men or infants or cattle or medicines, for 'she is dirty' and her
'dirt' is thought to cause purging and to rot medicines, and she,

[1] The 'filth' is on the wife because she cleanses her husband with her hands.

[2] Coitus interruptus is practised until the mother is ready to conceive again. Formerly [513]
it was taken to make a woman pregnant before her previous child was four or five
years old. Her husband's sisters made a great ado about it. The child must know
how to run before a younger brother was born. We said: 'How can a woman carry
two children?' Now she becomes pregnant again when the elder is two. Of those who
bear again before that it is said: 'They kill the elder child.' ' (Statement of Ntajigwa,
an elderly man.)

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for her part, fears lest themedicines with which men protect themselves and their cattle may injure her, causing her menstrual flow to 'last a whole month'. She avoids pumpkins lest she suffer from a small growth in the vagina called a 'pumpkin' and bear sickly children. 'It is said that this disease is due to women picking or eating pumpkins when tey are menstruating . . . the menstrual blood resembles the pumpkin and they fight together.'

If a wife fails to warn her husband that she is menstruating and permits him to have intercourse with her, he will be furiously angry and may even divorce her saying: 'You are soiling me, get out!'

Any contact with a menstruating woman is believed to cause him suffering. 'His legs become swollen and painful and he is very tired.' 'Strength leaves tr man.' 'He sits back weakly; he has no speed in running.' Kasile explained:

> The danger of menstrual blood is that it is filthy; it is an illness. Formerly, if a foolhardy man took his wife when she was menstruating, when he went to war, he fell. We others said: 'Why were you vanquished? Did you enter who your wife was unwell? Do you not know that it is a very serious illness?'

Angumbwike added:

> Formerly, the fear was greater than it is to-day. If a man made love to a menstruating woman tey said he would fall ill of *ondele*, an illness for which there was no remedy. His belly ached and his body grew red; he just lay down. His face swlled and his legs ached. Now pagans are not so much afraid of menstruation; they have listened to the Christians.

Asked why sleeping with a menstruating woman should make a man weary, informants linked the danger from menstrual blood with the danger that lowers a husband when his wife commits adultery, and the 'blood' of two men mixes in the woman's womb. Menstrual blood is not so dangerous to a husband as the 'blood' of another man, but yet it is 'filthy'. One of Mwakiondo's wives said:

> My husband gets tired if he sleeps with me when I am menstruating because he has given us our menstrual blood; it is that which has entered into me; there are two bloods, his and mine.

Mwambopeta, a village headman, elaborated further:

> If my wife has committed adultery and cooks my food or draws water for me, then my legs are weary and I also have diarrhoea. If she

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scrapes bananas when she is menstruating, or conceals that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, then my legs are tired, but I do not have diarrhoea, because it is my blood; she is my relative (*ndewa gwanga*), she is my wife, her blood and mine are one. But when she has lain with a man in the bush there is his blood; I have diarrhoea to get rid of it; the food which she cooks for me is dirty, she has made it filthy, I have diarrhoea and get rid of it, she oversteps me. And also if she has concealed that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, I am overstepped. To overstep is to insult—but since the blood is mine I do not get rid of it. That menstrual blood is very dirty!

If I have always been all right and strong, and I find that I get tired walking and hoeing, I think: 'What is it? See, always I was all right, and now I am very tired.' My friends say: 'It is women, you have lain with one who was menstruating.' And if I eat food and start diarrhoea they say: 'It's women, they have committed adultery.' My wives deny it. We go to divine, and one is caught; if she agrees that's that, but if she denied it, formerly we went to the poison ordeal. The woman drank alone, not I. If she vomited then I was defeated, the woman was good, but if it caught her then her father paid one cow.

What we feared greatly in the old days, Mwaipeja, was war. We feared to die. For if my fellow in the village committed adultery with my wife then, when we went to war, we both died; if we went to fight at Mwangomo's [a neighbouring chiefdom], both he and I would be speared. Then people were astonished and said: 'Why, have so-and-so and so-and-so died? Perhaps they both lay with the same woman.' For this reason we drove adulterers from the village, and for this reason the chief was angry with an adulterer, saying: "This is my place! Why do you kill my people!" '

Others confirmed Mwambuputa's statement that adultery led to death in battle:

Formerly, when there was war, if your fellow made love to your wife in secret and you all went to fight, you died on one day on account of the woman.

Mwandisi linked the disquiet in a man's belly with the anger of the shades seated there.

If a woman has gone behind the house with another man and comes and cooks food for her husband, blowing up the fire and cooking for him, then the food turns round in his stomach and says: 'Is this my kinsman?' She made friends with others behind the house and cooked for them [i.e. committed adultery]. So then the man develops diarrhoea because the food turned round in his stomach. He falls down on the road, he falls down in battle.

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die. . . . People feared very much because the Lwembe had medicines for smearing on his body, which could cause rain, sickness, food, ulcers, anything.

And they feared lest they might get ulcers if they killed one of Lwembe's men 'on the road'—*i.e.* a traveller. In short, Lwembe's mystical power afforded the first feeble beginnings of a 'king's peace' in a land of warring chiefdoms, where strangers were fair game.

(c) Mbande

Mbande is a hill on the plain of north Nyasaland with a commanding view of the surrounding country and well suited to defence. The west side is precipitous and below the scarp edge there used to be a marsh; to the north the hill is protected by a wide reach of the Lukulu river. It is a sacred place and for many generations was the home of the 'divine king', the Kyungu. Like the Lwembe he was the living representative of a hero, and was selected by a group of hereditary nobles from one of two related lineages, the office alternating (*if* suitable candidates were available) between the two. They sought a big man,[1] one who had begotten children and whose sons were already married, not a young man for, the nobles said, 'young men always want war, and destroy the country'. He must be a man of wisdom (*gwe mahale*) and generous in feeding his people.

The Kyungu's life was governed by taboos even more rigorous than those surrounding the Lwembe. He must not fall ill, or suffer a wound, or even scratch himself and bleed a little, for his ill health, or his blood falling on the earth would bring sickness to the whole country. 'Men feared when Kyungu's blood fell on the ground, they said, "It is his life".' 'If he had a headache his wives (*if* they loved him) told him not to mention it, they hid his illness; but if the nobles covered and found him ill they dug the grave and put him in it, saying, "He is the ruler (*mwene*), it's taboo for him to be ill". Then he thought: "Perhaps it is so" (with a gesture of resignation).'

Great precautions were taken to preserve his health. He lived in a separate house with his powerful medicines. His food was prepared by boys below the age of puberty lest a menstruating woman, or a youth who had lain with a woman, should touch it and so bring sickness upon him; and his numerous wives were

[1] (Symbolic meaning: he implies both big physically and important.)